

"Muhammad is....the Apostle of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets....."  
Holy Qur-an, 33 : 40.

"There will be no Prophet after me."  
Muhammad.

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# Islamic Review

Founded by the Late AL-HAJ KHWAJA KAMAL-UD-DIN

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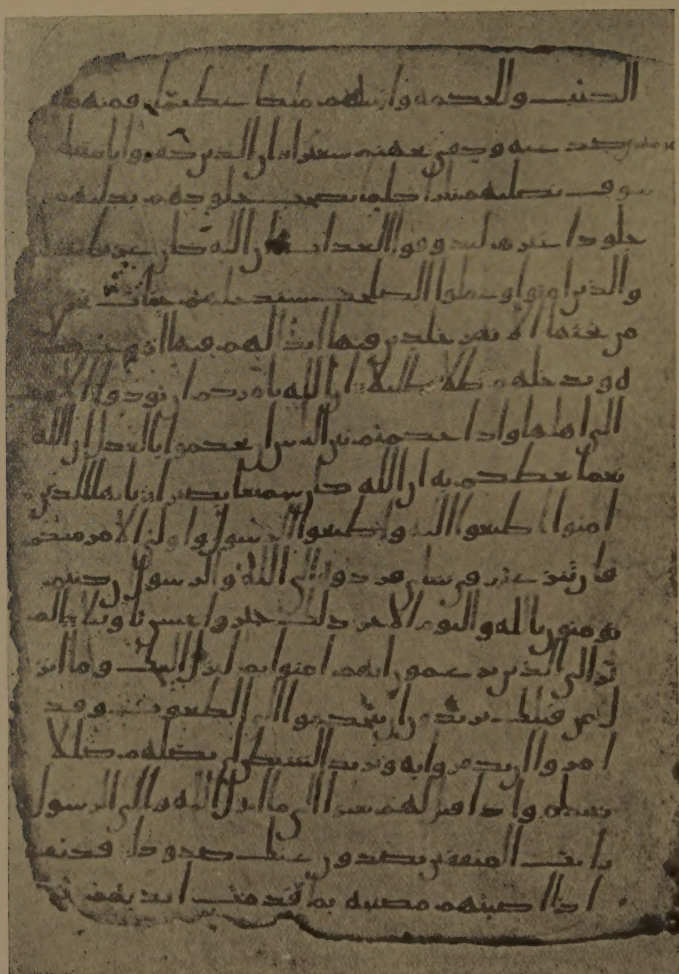
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Facsimile of an Olden Leaf of the Holy Qur-an.

(Chapter IV, verses 54—62.)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

نَحْمَدُكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مُحَمَّدًا خَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ

# THE ISLAMIC REVIEW

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## MUHAMMAD : THE WORLD'S GREATEST BENEFACTOR

BY AL-HAJ QASSIM ALI JAIRAZBHOY

In the history of the world the Holy Prophet is regarded as the greatest of all benefactors, and this is a fact that even the greatest commentator has to acknowledge. The starting and basic point of all his teachings is that "there is no god but One God, and Muhammad is His Prophet."

The history of the world shows that from the time of the first religious person to the beginning of the new civilization the world has remained divided between two groups of people, the oppressor and the oppressed. One assumed superiority over the other; difference of birth, race and wealth, pomp and power made it regard the other with contempt. The trouble to-day is the same; there is everlastingly some dispute over Imperialism, colour and race. And there are disputes between the rich



and the poor, the employer and the employed, the landlord and the peasant, and the like, for self-delusion and self-aggrandisement are still the cause, as they always were, of all human troubles and misunderstandings.

The only remedy for this state of things is the Book which Allah revealed to the Holy Prophet 1300 years ago. This book is so complete and sufficient, both as regards its language and spirit, that in spite of all the advance made in modern thought the greatest thinkers of to-day cannot say a word against it. This book is so simple that it needs no priests to interpret it to the Muslims. It is so great a book, that it is no wonder that a hardened critic like Professor D. S. Margoliouth was obliged, in the preface of the Qur-án by Rodwell, to admit its greatness. The Qur-án, by its perfect teachings, has induced the Muslims to make themselves masters of all the sciences and arts of the world, with the result that Islam became the University of Europe in the Middle Ages. Before the Prophet's advent the world was in a perilous state, but he changed everything, making all human beings equal and ending once and for all the questions of superiority and inferiority.

Not only did he make an end of slavery, but he repudiated all such ideas and notions as make one man despise another. It is the teachings of the Prophet that have given us our democratic institutions wherein the King rules by and with the advice and consent of the representatives of the people. This teaches us to respect the opinion of another person, and thus a spirit is born which guides us to solve all the hidden problems of humanity. And so the Prophet established a brotherhood which knows no restrictions of colour, race, wealth and power, and under which all stand shoulder to shoulder to pray to the One and only God Who is True and Real.

He taught us that birth was an event over which human beings had no control. Wealth, he said, cannot

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be attained without the help of others, and asked men to keep "zakāt" (poor-rate) separate as a way of co-operation with others. Strength, he said, was the result of natural and physical conditions. The education of the heart depends on self-exertion. "The heart of mankind is the science of wisdom ; it leads a man either to Hell or Heaven."

Mr. H. G. Wells, the famous author of to-day writes : "Muhammad was not a liar....his thoughts used to be the same as God's revelation." No doubt the Holy Prophet dedicated his life to preaching the word of God with such wisdom and resolution of purpose that it is difficult to separate him from the attributes of God, and because of this he has attained to such a perfection of humanity that he is, and always will be, the greatest benefactor of the world.

I think it is a pity that the world to-day puts things of no worth before that which alone can bring love and peace to humanity. It is high time that we realised that World Peace and harmonious international relations can only be achieved in following the "principles of Islam." A time surely will come, sooner or later, when the world will be forced to admit that the only means to end all its troubles is to follow the perfect teachings and examples of the Holy Prophet, writes Mr. George Bernard Shaw in his "Getting Married."

From time to time Allah sent Prophets for the reform and guidance of the people, and to bring to life their deadened feelings by stirring in them a desire for spiritual attainment. Every Prophet came with this mission. They were all builders of spirituality, and they discharged their duties with honour and credit, and succeeded in their efforts. It is, of course, a different thing that later generations regarded their teachings as wrong, or interpreted them wrongly ; but it remains a truth and a fact that



these Prophets were all messengers of One and the same God, and the preachers of the highest form of spirituality. They succeeded in leading the poor wanderers back to the true path, for only those who come from God can reform others and guide them back to God. Spirituality was the combined mission of all Prophets and the sole purpose of the creation of man.

All religious teachers are equally agreed on the importance of the attainment of spirituality, and have made it the foundation of their respective religions, but their followers differed always in their concepts of the word. Some understood it to be the renunciation of the world, and the severance of all human connections; others made celibacy the means for its attainment. Some regarded the abstinence from delicious food and fine clothing to be spirituality; others the saying of prayers without end, the performance of all sorts of rituals, litanies and the like. Many and varied definitions have made of the word a mystery. All were eager for it, but none were agreed over the meaning of it. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, at his coming, taught them all that their conceptions of spirituality were entirely wrong: he taught and made them believe that spirituality is something above and beyond all religious practices.

The falsity of their conceptions becomes clear when it is pointed out that God would not have created so many things in the world, if he had wished human beings to abstain from or renounce them. The very fact that God has created such things is enough to show that He desired human beings to participate in them, and—who knows—by their aid to attain to spirituality. I should say that the participation in all things created, except in things forbidden, is essential for the attainment of spirituality; to renounce them is wrong, and an act of sheer ingratitude to God. That is why those who followed the former



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policy have failed hopelessly in the attainment of spirituality. True spirituality consists in the method adopted, together with participation in the things created. Allah sent man after showing him the difference between Right and Wrong, to adopt a course in practical life that would lead him back to Him. If there was no wrong in the world, then right and goodness become nothing, and less than nothing. Spirituality is not to renounce the world in order to avoid wrong and attain good. Wrong should not be shunned, but fought with resolution and courage. True spirituality is, to remain in the human world, amidst all temptations ; then to combat all evil and attain good. If a blind man says he is good because he has never seen any one of the opposite sex with lust, then he is wrong, he did not look because he could not see; probably, had he had sight, he would have looked ; but to have eyes and then not to look with lust would be good. Similarly, those who renounce the world cannot say that they are really good, for they shut themselves up in solitude, away from all worldly temptation, so that they cannot help being good. The beauty and greatness of what is good and what is right lie in the presence of their opposite qualities ; then they become valuable. A person can only hope to attain true spirituality if he lives under the existing and natural conditions of life, by discharging and respecting all obligations, both to God and his fellow-men. Therefore, those who renounce the world acknowledge their own weakness, and prove that they are not competent enough to fight down temptation. Such people are often acclaimed religious or spiritual by the ignorant masses, but the system is wrong. God does not wish it, and no true religion of His demands from human beings the renunciation of the world, or the non-participation in what has been especially created for them.

People adopt such views wrongly, and therefore the Qur-án was revealed to repudiate them and show the

correct perspective. It is not wrong to say that Islam changed the entire religious outlook, by making it possible for human beings to attain spirituality together with participation in such things of the world. Concerning celibacy and the priesthood of the Nasara (or Christian) it is said in the Qur-án : “ As for monkery, they invented it. We did not prescribe it to them, only to seek Allah’s pleasure, but they did not observe it with observance.” The Prophet says : “ Islam does not recognize monkery.” In the Qur-án there is much written concerning food, clothing and the like : “ Who has prohibited the embellishment of Allah, which He has brought forth for His servants, and the good provisions.” Which means that these are the benefits of true believers in this life, and that it is obligatory for them to participate in them. Once the Prophet advised a rich Muslim to wear handsome clothes saying “ God wishes that human beings show gratitude to Him by using the things He has given them.”

On the subject of marriage there are clear and simple rules in the Qur-án, and the words of the Holy Prophet are : “ To marry is to follow my example, one who avoids it is not of me.” In all things the Prophet showed that spirituality does not mean just fasting and prayer, nor the renunciation of the world ; he defined it as the height attained by prayer and fasting, along with the discharge of worldly obligations. In this wise the Prophet said that to maintain a wife according to the decrees of religion is also a good thing, and a means to the attainment of spirituality. A group of companions once wanted to renounce the world to that end, but the Holy Prophet forbade it, telling them to follow his own example, which was to fulfil one’s duty to Allah as well as to the world. The Qur-án says : “ If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you.” Millions have succeeded in gaining spirituality by following the example and teachings of



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the Holy Prophet, millions are succeeding and millions more will succeed in this only way.

The Qur-án was revealed to the Holy Prophet as the final and complete Book of God for the benefit of humanity. The world was a lost world, a sea of sin. Men had discarded all theories of the good and the spiritual. In the words of the Qur-án: "On land and sea moral degradation had settled." When the evil became universal, it was necessary to adopt a universal cure. The Qur-án says: "To-day your religion is made complete and perfect," which means that the religion that was inaugurated by God in the beginning of the world became complete on His sending the Qur-án through the Holy Prophet Muhammad. As a child is taught his alphabet, so God taught the religion of the world gradually, and little by little, by sending at different times, and to different peoples, His Prophets to teach His religion. When the world had reached that stage of understanding when it was ready for the final lesson, He sent the last and complete Book through Muhammad, for the perfection of Mankind, so that by following it men may attain to the goal of perfection.

It is right that the teacher of a religion so perfect should himself be a perfect man, so God selected Muhammad to be the guide and reformer of the whole world. God's words concerning the Qur-án are: "It is for all, seen and unseen," and concerning the Prophet, "He is sent by Allah as the Prophet for all." Because of this God granted him the title of *Khatam-un-Nabiyyeen*, which title not only means "the last of the Prophets," but also many things that go to prove that he was the greatest Prophet of Allah, and the benefactor of the world. One meaning of the word *Khatam* is ring, so the whole phrase means that the Holy Prophet encompasses all Prophets as the ring encompasses the finger. And it

was because of this that he was made Prophet of the whole world ; and the Book given to him was made to comprise the teachings of all the Prophets. God Himself says : “ All the teachings of all other Prophets were thus secured.” The Qur-án comprises all other revealed books, and the Holy Prophet all other Prophets. The word *Khatam* again means an ornament, therefore the phrase may also mean that the Holy Prophet is the ornament of all Prophets. All blame put upon other Prophets disappears under this phrase. So this clearing of the characters of the other Prophets was only achieved by the Prophet of Islam. Other books deny the presence of Prophets among people other than themselves, but the Qur-án says : “ Allah sent Prophets to different people at different times, for the uplifting of their souls and for their guidance ; therefore the believers should believe in all.” It also connects all Prophets in a bond of love in these words : “ All Prophets are brothers.”

When the Holy Prophet attained Prophethood, and before his preaching, he at first met with abuse and was hooted and reviled. He addressed the people thus : “ I spent the greater part of my life among you before becoming a Prophet, you all know that I never did wrong ; but to-day you find fault with my teaching.” They tried by all the means in their power to put an end to his preachings. He was tortured, abused, and put to many kinds of hardships, but never did he swerve from his duty to God. When the people saw that all they did was of no avail, they sought to tempt him by offering riches, women and position ; but the Holy Prophet turned down their offer with the remark that he would not desist from his duty even if they brought the Sun to him and placed it on one hand and the Moon on the other. Throughout he remained steadfast in spite of all threats and all temptations. Any other man would have fallen in the face of such temptations, but he did not pay the slightest heed to the offers



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made to him ; instead, by his example and teachings he showed a disgust for all the frivolous things of this life. He told his wives that if they hankered after the world and its luxuries, he would give them as much as they wanted, but they would have to go away. Nevertheless, he was so much respected and loved by them all that they said that they would rather stay with him and live a poor and simple life, than leave him and live a luxurious one. His examples of godliness and kindness were such that his most severe critics could find nothing to say against him. A man can at a pinch hide his true character before the world at large, but this he cannot do in his own home, and in his own home the demeanour of the Holy Prophet was so perfect that he was adored by all the members of his household. After his death his wives always remembered him, and shed tears at the loss of such an ideal husband.

I have already mentioned that God gave to the Holy Prophet the title of *Khatam-un-Nabiyyeen*, and I would add that the word *Khatam*, besides meaning a ring, ornament, etc., also means *Seal* ; so that we can say that he was sent as the *Seal* of all the Prophets, and that God meant his Prophethood to be the last, and that He will not send any more Prophets after Muhammad.

The Holy Prophet was a perfect example of poverty in riches. Later, when success brought plenty to Medina, he never partook of it. His was the heart that had only one image in it, and one purpose, that of Allah ; there was no room there for worldly things. He would often say : “ A simple house to live in, clothes enough to cover one, and some bread to eat, are quite enough for the sustenance of human life.”

I have spoken before of the great miracles that the Holy Prophet accomplished for womanhood, and that

before Islam woman was considered to be among the meanest creation of God. The followers of Jesus had called her a devil and the tool of the devil, because of the crucifixion of Jesus to atone for the sin of Adam committed at the instigation of a woman. Hinduism too gives her no better place than that of a slave and a servant of man. Krishna, who is often painted in the company of *Gopis* (milkmaids), when he attained spirituality, discarded them as beings unclean, but in the 6th century A. D. the benefactor of the world changed the whole outlook on woman. From lowly and mean she became a being to be loved and respected. The Holy Prophet would often say: "Paradise is beneath your mother's feet."

In spite of his nearness to Allah, in spite of being the greatest of all Prophets, Muhammad used to say his prayers with as much zeal as though he was a lost soul seeking God. He would spend nights standing in prayer, regardless of physical pain; but what was mere physical pain to one whose heart was filled with Allah? He was never perfectly at rest unless he was in communion with Allah. He would pray for all. All peoples, men and women, young and old, were equally the recipients of his benefits, his kindness and his love. Even his bitterest foe found in him a friend. At the battle of Uhud the Holy Prophet was wounded, and knew that the enemy was bent on taking his life; but still he prayed: "Allah forgive them for they know not what they are doing." The people of Taif did all in their power to torture and harm him, and in return he prayed for them: "O Allah forgive them, give them the privilege of joining Islam and send them as friends to Medina." The Arabs were the greatest of unbelievers, but the kindness and love of the Holy Prophet succeeded in winning them over to Islam. And soon



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they were proud to submit themselves to the wonderful personality of the Holy Prophet.

The love and respect which a person wins in the heart of another depends largely on the benefit which that other derives from him. The heart of man is so fashioned that he is bound to love and respect those that do him good or some kind service. As there are infallible laws of nature, so there are of humanity, and any deviation from them, such as blind love or blind hatred, does not last long. A being who by his example does good and uplifts the souls of others is bound to be loved and respected. The proof of the following Qur-anic saying is to be found in the histories of all nations: "For those persons who believe in God, who always do good deeds, God gives love in the hearts of human beings."

Reason and careful study will lead one and all to admit the very great obligation which the world owes to the Holy Prophet. I do not say this because of my faith, but because of facts, and I do not think any one in the world, whether Hindu or Christian, will deny it. The real benefactors of the world are those who dedicate their lives to the good of humanity. Such people are found in all nations, and universal love and respect should be their portion. The doers of good, be they Moses, Rama, Krishna, Zoroaster, Buddha or Jesus, are, every one of them, to be respected. On the roll of benefactors the name of Muhammad shines out as the greatest; what he did for Arabia and the world at large, in so short a time, no other Prophet before him was able to do. Within the short space of twenty years the Arabs, who were the most ignorant, illiterate and superstitious of nations, became the greatest, the most learned and the most civilized nation of the world; he caused the disunited, scattered and least known nation of the world to establish empires and devise laws of government that spread all over the world.

The Holy Prophet consolidated the Arabs ; from a divided people they soon became a united nation, each and every individual working together and sympathising with each other instead of fighting as before. Allah in the Qur-án says : "Thank God, Who had bestowed so many things for your benefit, before you were the enemies of one another, and fought among yourselves, but now Allah has made you regard one another as brothers by placing love and sympathy in your hearts."<sup>1</sup>

He made the life and the working condition of the slave tolerable by enforcing the same treatment for him as for a member of the family. The Islamic Brotherhood, which the teachings of the Prophet brought into being, did away with all social inequalities between man and man, and woman and woman. He taught them to treat slaves with kindness and love, and made the liberation of a slave a meritorious act. He insisted that no free person should forcibly be made a slave, and that those who were already slaves should be treated as members of the family and granted freedom gradually. The Holy Prophet made it an obligation on the part of the Islamic Government to budget annually for the allocation of a certain percentage of the revenues to the purpose of the liberation of the slaves, by paying the ransom from the Government exchequer.

The Holy Prophet changed all misconceptions about women. He taught the Arabs to regard them as friends and companions, and to be kind and loving to them. He said : "A person who does not show kindness should not expect kindness from God." He taught them to regard infanticide as abominable and most displeasing to God, and thus it soon came to an end.

He had great regard for the rights of women ; since the passing away of the matriarchal form of society

<sup>1</sup> The Holy Qur-án. 3 : 102.



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women were, for the first time, emancipated by the Prophet. He showed, by his example, love, care, and respect that was due to them. And so woman, once deemed the lowest of the low, was raised up to a position of great dignity.

Is it any wonder, then, that the Christian historians of Europe should admit that of all the reformers and Prophets of the world the Holy Prophet Muhammad was the most successful and the greatest? His intention was great, and not restricted to one people or country as were those of the other Prophets. Any nation, be it Afghan, Turk or another, who sought for guidance, was helped and prospered. The brotherhood which he established comprised all races, black or white, weak or strong, great or small—all were made equal participants in the goods of the world. If the white had a right to become great and famous, so had the black and the slaves; history records cases where slaves became kings. No one before Muhammad had conceived of such a brotherhood as this of the whole world; Muhammad, the greatest of God's Prophets, not only conceived it, but established it, and thus removed all barriers of caste, colour and race. It is, therefore, the duty of the whole world not only to recognise, but also to love and respect such a great and wonderful personality.

Muhammad came at a time when the world had extinguished all light given by the other Prophets, and was plunged in utter darkness and ignorance. Judaism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and all the rest of the religions, had become religions only in name, for their followers had completely forgotten every principle. The last religion of the world before Islam was Christianity; its principles were really true and great, but they were never put into practice. The depth to which the Christians had at this time fallen can best be explained by a Christian,

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Muir writes: "The condition of the Christians was most degrading,.....and if Muhammad had not come..... then the world would have always remained dark and ignorant." The words that the Qur-án used in this connection 1300 years ago are almost the same as those used by a scholar of to-day writing in the light of modern historical research. The Qur-anic words are—"Corruption appeared in land and sea." And Mr. Dennison, discussing Islam in his book *Emotions as the Basis of Civilization*, mentions the following facts: "In the 5th and 6th century A.D. the world was standing on the verge of darkness. Ancient thoughts, the basis of which are emotions, and which made the existence of the world possible by teaching love and respect, were dead. There was no new light to take its place. It looked as if the civilization that was built in 4000 years was on the point of destruction, and that the world was about to go back to the age of complete darkness and barbarism.....civilization, like a big tree the branches of which had spread all over, looked as if it were going to give way from the very root by being eaten up.....Was there anything that could have saved civilization and the whole world from destruction by uniting and consolidating all the forces?" Answering his own question, the author in describing the Arabs speaks of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, in these terms: "These were the people among whom was born a man who united the world from the East to the West in the Unity of God, and saved the world from destruction." Is it not correct, then, to say that Muhammad kept civilization alive in the world? Colossal is the obligation under which humanity lies to him, and greatly do I pity those who, instead of love and respect for the one and only benefactor of the world, have for him nothing but abuse, malice and slander. Such men should remember that the laws of God are infallible, and thus all will one

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day realise and acknowledge their obligation to Muhammad the Holy Prophet.

Success can only be achieved in the world by following the Holy Prophet. Fallen nations can rise only by taking heed to his teachings; the oppressed and the down-trodden can find happiness and peace only by obeying his instructions; the cruel can give up cruelty only by following the example of the Holy Prophet.

One of the chief troubles with the world to-day is that one nation is too fond of asserting its greatness and superiority over the other. Just because it happens to be a particular land where the people are white, it regards itself as superior, and looks down on those who are dark, deeming coloured people to be inferior in intelligence, manners and standards of life. The havoc and misery that this racial and colour prejudice has caused and is still causing can be better understood by studying the conditions of the countries where this question is an urgent one. Take, for instance, the "coloured" people of Africa and America. They will tell a tale that will shock the feelings of many. They will tell of the cruel treatment meted out to them by those "white masters" of theirs, and how wealth and position cannot help them in any way. There was a "coloured" man—an editor of a great newspaper in America. He married a white woman, but when he went to London on business, no hotel would give him accommodation. Why? Simply because he belonged to a "coloured" race. He had wealth, money enough to stay at the best hotel, but that was not the point. Once, a West Indian, an assistant Station Master, was travelling on board a steamer. He was never seen to take his baths, and when questioned on the subject, he said that he took baths daily, but he had to do it late at night. He dared not do so in the day-time. When pressed for the reason, he further explained that a few



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weeks previously one of his countrymen was on a voyage, he was seen using the baths and was very roughly treated by the white men on board, because he said he had the audacity to use the same baths as the white men. A friend of mine tells me that a short time ago he was staying in India at a certain big hotel, and that among the numerous people there was an Englishman who had a dog. The Englishman was on speaking terms with my friend, and although well aware that the latter was an Indian, he often would show his dislike and contempt, and air his poor opinion of India and the Indians. Once he said in the hearing of my friend, "Indians bark ! This dog of mine has more intelligence than an Indian !" That man, who called himself a "gentleman," was in all probability one of the many common and uneducated persons who come to India, to make their pile because of their white skins. That man, when he has made enough, will go back to his country, to live a fat and lazy life, with a nice big banking account and a cheque book ready at his hand, at the cost of the poor Indians he so much despised.

When you read the history of Islam, you will realise what is meant when it is said that the Holy Prophet removed all distinctions of colour and race between men and men, and brought them under one brotherhood of Islam. The coloured Muslims have no fear of being snubbed by the white men who have embraced Islam. The Islamic principles have secured them the right of absolute equality, and encouraged them to activities in all directions of human effort and co-operation. There is in Islam no such thing as "inferiority complex" for they are taught that all human beings are equal.

One of the greatest benefits derived from the teachings of the Holy Prophet is in connection with education and learning. His words are : "Avoid ignorance, seek

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learning and always endeavour to add to it, and pray God to help you." The success of the European nations lies in the fact that they sought and still do seek education, learning and knowledge ; those nations that are behind in learning are also behind in advancement and achievement. Without learning no advancement in any line is possible. The Muslims of to-day somehow seem to have lost their appetite for learning ; they would rather waste in rubbish than read literature that would improve their minds ; and the result can be seen in their position to-day. Statistics show that there are no more than 7 per cent. of them literate to-day. The world has known no greater educational reformer than was the Holy Prophet of Islam ; and the fact that the Muslims of to-day are not as literate as they should be does not mean that the teachings of the Holy Prophet are at fault. The state into which they have drifted is of their own devising, and if they had only followed the example of the Holy Prophet they would have been far differently placed.

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## REMEMBER THE WORDS OF THE MESSENGER

BY W. B. BASHYR-PICKARD, B.A. (CANTAB.)

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

There is no god but THE GOD, the ONE, Lord of all creatures, the First and the Last, the Wise. Praise to His Name, Who sent His messenger, Muhammad the Prophet, the Seal of the Prophets ! May the Peace of God abide with him and may the message delivered by Muhammad be brightened in the hearts of men !

O believers, call to mind the life of Muhammad, the Messenger of God, and consider it carefully. Can you find in any other recorded life so clear an example to follow ? Can you find in any other of humanity so great a source of comfort, of inspiration, of courage, of guidance

towards the right living of your own life? Consider in detail this outstanding example, and re-awaken the blessed light of Islam, binding closer the bond of brotherhood.

First and foremost, it appears to me that the life of the Prophet Muhammad is a glorious light, showing forth the victory that each human being will win (by the permission of God) by a steadfast, unflinching trust in God, by a calm, unmovable courage, based upon complete reliance upon God (and upon Allah should the believers rely).

Observe, then, the Holy Prophet at an early age an orphan, deprived of the support of both father and mother, holding fast by God and leading an upright life amid prevailing corruption, consistently fulfilling the obligations and proving himself reliable, so that he wins for himself the designation of "the faithful," his choice of righteousness remaining firm amidst surrounding evil, and his life courageously kept uncontaminated by the prevailing vices of his day.

Secondly, in later life behold the Prophet trusting absolutely in God and commencing to preach the true faith, that there is but one God, to preach this truth in spite of the hostility of his relations and the persecutions of his countrymen. Behold the Prophet, fleeing from those who sought to exterminate the uprising religion, fleeing from the Holy City of Mecca and taking refuge in the lonely cave on Mt. Thaur. There with one sole companion, the blessed Abu Bekr (upon whom be peace!), remember well the words of the Prophet, spoken calmly without dismay, when the pursuers came in their search even to the mouth of the cave: "Verily, God is with us," *Innállaha ma'áná*.

Thirdly, at Medina. Is it not a signal expression of complete trust in God that the holy Prophet, having been forced to abandon the most sacred city of Mecca with its



## REMEMBER THE WORDS OF THE MESSENGER

dearest and most ancient associations with the One true God dating back to the time of Abraham, should patiently and with undaunted courage stand fast by the Truth to establish it afresh in a new, and at that time unrenowned, city? The mainspring of the Prophet's life would seem to be something which can thrill the hearts of men, of whatever race, to this day even: "Stand by the Truth and trust in God."

May the Peace of God abide with so mighty an example to humanity! and may Allah aid his followers!

Let us now consider some of the Hadiths, the Sayings of the Holy Prophet, with short commentary.

1. "*Imbue yourself with Divine virtues.*"

God has created man with the possibilities of perfection innate in his being. God has sent man the Guidance. God is also the aider of those who call upon Him in the sincerity of a pure heart. It devolves, therefore, upon man to take the necessary action. His condition and fate is so far in his own hands that his own action is necessary, if he is to advance towards perfection. Man must himself meditate upon the attributes of God (Mercy, Justice, Generosity, Truth, Peace, Forgiveness, Wisdom, Graciousness) and constrain himself to practise these attributes, until his life shineth with the light therefrom.

2. "*God says : O man, only follow My Laws and you shall become like Myself.*"

To attain to perfection man must proceed upon the path, must follow the Laws, which the Almighty hath established. Here again we notice that definite action is required on the part of man. There can be no following, no progress in the right direction without self-action. It therefore behoves us to act. "Only follow My Laws:" we must first find out what those Laws are, and, of a certainty, a reading of the Qur-án will manifest some of these Laws. If first of all we recognise some of the greater Laws and follow them, the way, doubtless, will be opened up to other

Laws, giving us a vista, a prospect, a possibility of still further progress.

3. *“ Do you love your Creator ? Love your fellow beings first,”*

If you love God, show forth your love in practical everyday life towards humanity, to all men whomsoever thou dost meet. If you love God, shut not yourself away in solitary communion, but live amongst your fellows, your brethren : irradiate their lives, warm their hearts, with the love of God that gloweth within you. Seek to serve humanity, seek to aid humanity, and lo ! how nearly hast thou advanced towards the Beloved !

4. *“ Who is the most favoured of God ? He from whom the greatest good cometh to His creatures.”*

Yet more clearly is the path revealed. The favour and blessing of God is to be sought by becoming the means whereby good cometh down (by the permission of Allah) upon the creatures of God. If thou hast good thou canst do, do it : delay not ! Surely God showeth His favour to such !

5. *“ The best of men is he from whom good accrueth to humanity.”*

Another Hadith emphasizing what has gone before, but note the word ‘humanity.’ Your charity, your love, your feelings of friendship and fraternity should be world-wide, unhampered by class distinctions, national prejudices or racial diversity. Pride of place should not prevent your looking towards those placed in the wordly scale below you ; neither should your charity and love be frozen towards those placed higher in wordly estate.

6. *“ All God’s creatures are His family ; and he is the most beloved of God, who trieth to do most good to God’s creatures.”*

Your kindness must go out to everything that God (Whose Name be praised !) hath created. Thou shouldst

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be in sympathy with man, bird and beast, with the seas, the mountains and the clouds, so that thou movest amidst the mighty family of God (Praise to His Name ?), even as one at peace with all, well-pleased and well-doing.

Now the most fruitful source of the favour of God will be found where there is existing a straitness of circumstances, a case requiring patience in facing the absence of bountiful means. Seek out such, for they are opportunities for the exercise of kindness and good actions. So, in concluding this portion, I would quote yet one more Hadith upon this subject, namely :

7. “ *Seek for My goodwill in that of the poor and indigent.*”

Let us now turn to another series of Hadiths well-known indeed, yet which demand the continual attention of every one of the Faithful.

8. “ *He dieth not who takes to learning.*”

Ignorance is the slough of death, the morass of baleful torpor, dragging down to death whoever remains therein. To pursue learning is to lay hold upon life and to extricate one's being from the mire.

Learning, then, giveth life and, to quote another Hadith, we find that this life is to be used for yet more vigorous action, for life yet fuller.

9. “ *Seek after knowledge, though it be available in China.*”

Thou hast entered into life by taking to learning. This life will invigorate and exhilarate thee. Behold ! how far-flung are the boundaries of knowledge ? Canst thou, indeed, observe any boundaries ? Go even unto China : take the utmost exertions, for the nature of what thou pursuest is of the utmost value.

And other Hadiths, being mentioned, will help us to pursue the path without being turned easily aside by distractions, without diverging upon the uncertain trackways of multitudinous error. Let me quote :



10. “ *Leave alone what does not concern you in preference to what concerns you.*”

Keep the end in view. Discriminate, beware against the ambush of the irrelevant, the unprofitable, whereby you may be side-tracked. How great, also, the labour to extricate oneself from other people's business, when once one has become involved therein ; and how numerous the inconveniences ever being brought to birth by immoderate meddling !

Further, as to the best characteristics of the Faithful, we learn from two Hadiths, which may well conclude this study :

11. “ *Much silence and a good disposition : there are no two works better than those.*”

The best silence is most precious, and the best silence is that of a good disposition. Mere silence is insufficient. It may cause uneasiness, or bring misunderstandings, or even be the mark of the morose ; but an amiable silence, how great the charm, the depth, the comfort ! where idle words and vanity weary not, nor vex !

And finally :

12. “ *All kinds of modesty are best.*”

How emphatic ! There are so many modesties ; so many phases of this jewel of perfection, and each is best. Every facet of the gem shines with the purest light. The modesty of dress, that is best, and, by the side thereof, the modesty of action, that too is best. Springing from the modesty of thought, shines forth the modesty of speech, and both are best.

May Allah aid us to keep safe this gem !

NOTE.—For the English translation of the Hadiths given above, I am indebted to “ *Some of the Sayings of Muhammad,*” edited by the late Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din.

## MUHAMMAD : THE PROPHET

### MUHAMMAD : THE PROPHET

#### FOUNDER OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISLAM

By M. A. C. M. SALEH

This year, the twelfth of Rabi-ul-Awwal—the lunar month of the Muslim Era—fell on the 25th of June, a date which has a threefold significance for all Muslims. Within the first twelve days of this sacred month, Muhammad, or the Praised One, was born ; the Hijrat, associated with his journey to Medina, constituting the commencement of the Muslim Calendar, occurred ; and, finally, he departed this life to the celestial abode of blessed companionship. The Muslim world therefore celebrates this unique occasion in a manner befitting the most eventful life ever recorded in history.

The history of Islam actually begins with the birth of the Arabian Prophet, and a complete study of his life in all its aspects is what chroniclers of unimpeachable character have made to establish the universal truth that the ministry of Muhammad has been the most successful of all ministries in the annals of mankind.

The first Islamic principle which the Holy Prophet succeeded in planting on the soil of the Arabian Peninsula was Unity. He succeeded in uniting a congery of warring tribes, often sharply divided by tribal jealousies, into a nation that made history for eight hundred years, spreading her knowledge and culture throughout the world and giving a mighty impetus to civilization generally. His second attempt was the establishment of a living brotherhood which, to this day, evokes the world's admiration. The League of Nations has so far failed utterly to achieve its primary object of world-peace, for it has not realised the fundamental truth underlying such a conception. But the moment the formula promulgated by the Prophet of Islam on a basis of equality, and embodied in the Holy Qur-án in plain words —the Divine law

of God—is judiciously and unreservedly applied a practical solution of its difficulties will be within easy reach.

In Islam the basic principle of the equality of man is recognized and aggressive warfare is condemned. The code of Islam gives full scope to the individual for the exercise of his own independence, together with perfect freedom of action within the prescribed law of *Shariat*. The Holy Covenant of Islam lays emphasis on the recognition of the moral right to equal treatment which has its useful counterpart in the rapid expansion of the Islamic confraternity. The question of superior or inferior beings does not arise, and the faculty of reason is given an enhanced value, for the edifice of Islam rests on rational grounds. There is no place in Islam for racial pride: neither does priesthood in the sense of an intercessory class exist.

The principle of democracy wipes off all claims based upon superiority of race and hereditary rights of succession. It is intellect and merit that count in all institutions governed by the Divine Law of God which is entirely in harmony with the laws of Nature. The best among Muslims are those who are most devoted to the service of Allah in being painfully sensitive to the sufferings of humanity. During the time the Holy Prophet presided over the Republic of Islam, he often stressed the essential fact that he was one among them and claimed no superiority for himself. The only difference, he pointed out, between himself and his fellow-beings was that the choice of God had fallen on him, to transmit His Message to mankind.

An intimate study of the Holy Prophet's life would reveal the fact that he possessed a spotless and unblemished character, his simple ways and gentle disposition earning him the name of *Al-Ameen*, the Trusted. The success of



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his mission can be gauged from the tributes of celebrated writers of ancient and modern times. Gibbon and Bernard Shaw have approached him from an altogether different angle not uncritically yet with an admiration that is unbounded. One eminent European writer attributes the practical achievements of the Prophet to that most rare combination in his character of the often conflicting qualities of sweetness and manliness.

With regard to the tolerance which The Holy Prophet exercised, let me contrast the Charter to the Christians with the carnage, savagery and havoc wrought by the Crusaderst o crush the rise of Islam :—

“ In the sixth year of the Hegira, the Prophet granted to the monks of the Monastery of St. Catherine, near Mount Sirai, and to all Christians, a Charter, which is a monument of enlightened tolerance. By it the Prophet secured to the Christians important privileges and immunities, and the Moslems were prohibited under severe penalties from violating and abusing what was therein ordered. In this Charter the Prophet undertook himself, and enjoined his followers, to protect the Christians, to guard them from all injuries, and to defend their churches, and the residences of their priests. They were not to be unfairly taxed ; no bishop was to be driven out of his bishopric ; no Christian was to be forced to reject his religion ; no monk was to be expelled from his monastery ; no pilgrim was to be detained from his pilgrimage ; nor were the Christian churches to be pulled down for the sake of building mosques or houses for the Moslems. Christian women married to Moslems were to enjoy their own religion, and not to be subjected to compulsion or annoyance of any kind on that account. If the Christian should stand in need of assistance for the repair of their churches or monasteries, or any other matter pertaining to their religion, the Moslems were to assist them.”

In the hour of his triumph, the Holy Prophet granted a general amnesty to all, including those inveterate enemies who had plotted and planned treacherously to murder him and so nip the growth of Islam in the bud. He completely changed the character and manner of the people of Arabia within the very brief period occupied by his rise to the sovereignty of Jezirat-ul-Arab, which fact, in the words of Professor Noldeke, was a marvel. Before

the Holy Prophet passed away his parting words were thus recorded : “ Muslims, if I have wronged any one of you, here I am to answer for it ; if I owe aught to any one, all I may happen to possess belongs to you,” and concluded with the following words of the Holy Qur-án : “ The dwelling of the other life We will give unto them who do not seek to exalt themselves on earth or to do wrong ; for the happy issue shall attend the pious.”

The Muslims of this age have much to learn and appreciate about the contributions of Islam to the making of the modern world, and her rich legacy is still a gift of ours if we can only cultivate the same amount of zeal and devotion in rekindling the fire that once gave light to the whole world. Let us resolve faithfully from to-day to follow in the foot-steps of our Holy Prophet, whose life has been an embodiment of service and sacrifice, directed towards the elevation of man from fellowship with the beast that perish to the borders of divinity. This is the greatest and the noblest mission that Islam can offer for the salvation of mankind.

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### THE PROPHET'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE SCIENCE OF WAR

BY MUHAMMAD ALI AL-HAJ SALMIN

Such scrappy information as exists concerning the Prophet's contribution to the science of war is supplied by German Orientalists ; but their contribution to our knowledge, after all, is far from being exhaustive or correct, or in any way analogous to what could have been gathered from original sources and contemporary authors. Muslim Generals and Army Commanders, who are better fitted for the treatment of such a subject, should long ago have supplemented, with full and proper detail, the meagre account of German Oriental Scholars who have devoted themselves rather to enlarging upon the Prophet's successors, and in giving

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particulars about the Muslim monarchs. This great Commander's permanent and precious contribution to the science and ethics of warfare is worthy of a careful study—a Commander who fought to win, a Commander who had only a small army, and whose main weapon was an extraordinarily invisible strength of the spirit.

It is necessary, by way of contrast, first to note the military systems that were in vogue in Rome and Persia. The Roman Empire and also that of Persia had found it necessary to keep continually in service a regular number of paid soldiers, called mercenaries, for purposes of defence and for fresh conquests. Of course, nobles and members of the aristocracy were the commanders of such armies, besides what there was of the national militia, raised from the people, it being the duty of every individual citizen to bear arms in times of national crisis. The system of conscription was also in vogue, but here I am specially concerned with the permanent or standing army system, the army of mercenary soldiers who sold their lives for money. The average morale of such an army can more or less be guessed, since they only fought for money, not from patriotic or selfless motives. Such a system cannot, of itself, be the forcing ground of military virtues, rather, in such circumstances, the warlike spirits can be sustained only through vice and indulgence. In such a soldiery self-control and obedience cannot be looked for. Therefore, they gave free vent to lust and animal passion. Plunder and murder were to them second nature, and they carried fire and sword wherever they went. Their average life in barracks was even worse than during active service, and this was natural enough for it was an exotic and artificial, not a national, system which alone can instil the nobler human instincts.

In sharp contrast to this anti-national and barbarous system, the Holy Prophet was able to create a truly national army of Muslims, by making it the duty of



every Muslim to defend the motherland. He laid it down as a principle that no country had any justification to attack or invade another. He prohibited aggressive wars. He fought only unavoidable and defensive wars for the higher Cause—the vindication of Truth and Righteousness. For this reason a regular army of paid soldiers was unnecessary. Here was nothing of the savagery and brutality which characterised the Roman and the Persian armies. On the other hand, the Prophet infused into the minds of his Muslim soldiers—the soldiers of Allah—all the higher virtues of bravery, patience, endurance, steadfastness and chivalry. These soldiers fought for Islam, undergoing with remarkable endurance untold sufferings, privations and persecutions. They were a mere minority, a handful always fighting against odds, ill-equipped and ill-provisioned, yet ever emerging victorious. The Prophet's successive and decisive victories against overwhelming numbers with the small forces at his disposal are among the marvels of military history, showing, as they do, that he achieved all these things through sheer moral preponderance and virtue, and that spiritual force must always ultimately triumph over mere brutal and perverted physical strength. There was a world of difference between his army and other armies; but that it should have been free from all the vices inseparable from military life speaks volumes for the high standard of moral excellence that the great leader was able to create, as will appear from the following facts.

We have seen how in Rome and Persia the soldiers' fighting and warlike spirits were kept up by drink, gambling, hunting and the like, which were intended to make them fearless and courageous, hence they could not be other than barbarous and brutal, leading an utterly irresponsible life and careless of consequences. Even in the present-day military system, drink is an important item. But the

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Prophet's Muslim soldiers were fighting wars of most serious import, wars to defend the religion of Allah, and the great Commander kept up their spirits through religious zeal. He forbade drink, gambling and all other vicious and frivolous habits, and his noble band could fight for days together, undergoing patiently privation and starvation.

This great organizer of armies forbade plundering and looting altogether. During a period of ten years, while the Muslims were fighting battles by the score, these things were never once heard of. Consider the measure of self-control and discipline which must have been theirs and the mighty inspiration emanating from their great leader; consider, too, their lofty ideals. The whole of Mecca lay at the feet of the Prophet, the Mecca that had persecuted him and his faithful followers beyond measure. It would have been quite natural and legitimate for the conqueror and his army to take full advantage of their position, and wreak a grim vengeance on the Meccans who were and had been their bitterest enemies. A Cæsar or Napoleon would have entered the town in triumph, and a general massacre, pillage, and looting would have followed—quite a legitimate procedure according to the ordinary military ethics of the time. But note the unparalleled magnanimity of the unparalleled leader, and also the unparalleled spirit of discipline among his soldiers. Mecca was left untouched, the Mecca which had driven him to Medina and to war, the Mecca which had been the root of all his troubles. To those people he said :

There shall be no reproof against you this day; Allah may forgive you and He is the most Merciful of the Merciful.<sup>1</sup>

Is the like sublime conduct recorded of any other leader and his men. Was not the Prophet then a military genius in the purest and deepest sense of the

<sup>1</sup> The Holy Qur-án, 12 : 92.

words. The conquest of Mecca is one of the imperishable chapters in the military history of the world. It was no wonder that the same magnanimous spirit was exhibited by him and his men after the battle of Honein, when they released unconditionally about 6,000 captives who would have been their legitimate booty in the war. In brief, within a period of ten years he had wrought wonders, he who had had no place wherein to lay his head, who had to flee for his very life, returned triumphant to the scene whence he had fled. One can hardly fail to detect the genius behind these stirring and dramatic incidents.

It was the Prophet who taught the world the right use of the sword, the sword wielded not for aggression and self-glorification, but for righteous and humanitarian purposes. Says Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din in his book *The Ideal Prophet*: "I, however, maintain that at times it becomes one of our highest humanitarian duties to unsheath the sword. We cannot conscientiously stand aside as indifferent spectators when the liberties of an oppressed people are being trampled upon, when religious freedom is at stake. There do arise situations when the use of arms becomes an unavoidable necessity. But arms have often been used, and it was the duty of a Prophet from God to tell us the right occasion when the sword can be wielded."

Muhammad allowed the use of arms under the following circumstances:—

1. To preserve a House of God from destruction.
2. To establish freedom of conscience. No man has a right to force his faith down the throat of another. It is man's duty to take up the sword against every sort of persecution that threatens freedom of conscience. A Muslim must fight even against another Muslim, if the latter is oppressing even a Jew or a Christian.



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3. In self-defence.

4. Yet hostilities must be suspended when the enemy sues for peace.

The Prophet was mainly for peace, his aim was always to avoid warfare as far as possible and, as has been pointed out, he used the sword only in a righteous cause. This is amply proved from the fact that all his wars were purely defensive, and never aggressive. The treaty of Hudaibiyya only too clearly shows how he stood for avoiding unnecessary warfare, how he was ready for a compromise even though it might cost him dear, faithfully following his principle and the Quranic injunction which says :—

And if they (the enemy) incline towards peace, thou shalt also incline towards it.<sup>1</sup>

The Prophet introduced into his military system certain practical reforms which were calculated to raise the general moral standard of the army.

He made the soldiers lead a simple and hard life, inducing them to save their money and energy, preserving the same for good causes. Squandering money and frittering away energy are bad habits inherent in professional soldiers who are for the most part of a " don't care " nature.

2. He engendered among the Muslims a truly national and republican spirit, making the humblest realise that they were part and parcel of the state. Therefore they identified themselves completely with the interests of the state, feeling keenly for its loss, and largely contributing to its glory and gain. One cannot expect this sort of spirit from mercenaries.

3. The Prophet created a taste for the true military life, and directly inspired his men with courage and bravery by himself taking an active part in all their

<sup>1</sup>The Holy Qur-ân, 8 : 61.

military and physical exercises. His personality and personal example were a perennial fountain of unfailing inspiration.

4. He had a regular military organization; the whole army was divided into so many units, each unit being under the direct supervision of a chief who was responsible to him for that unit. His army was not a mere rabble, it was well-disciplined and well-organized, for this practical man had those natural and true military instincts, and ennobled the whole system with his high ideals.

5. He had proper arrangements for the comfort of the sick and wounded in battle. There were women nurses for this purpose, and thus to women also was given the opportunity of contributing their quota of help in the struggle.

6. He had an organised and regular way of providing for the expenses of his army. Every Muslim, rich and the poor alike, had to contribute proportionately and according to his means to the *Bait-ul-mal*. He did not put the burden of army expense on the poor alone. It was an equitable and just arrangement, for the soldiers were fighting for the cause of the whole country, and it was right that the whole country—that is, all classes—should contribute justly to their upkeep. Through this system too, the Prophet made proper provisions for the relatives and dependants of those killed in war. He made the state mainly responsible for the proper maintenance of its army, whether the soldiers were engaged in fighting or not, for food was essential at all times to maintain health and strength.

To study minutely and carefully the wonderful military organization of the Prophet is to understand the life and career of a born leader of men, a born commander whose lot it was to evolve a thoroughly practical

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military system. His ethics of warfare is a glorious chapter by itself from which modern nations may derive many valuable lessons regarding the ideal military organization. He fought to win ; he had always to face an overwhelmingly large army with a handful of men. The very number would have stunned another man. Yet he inspired his followers with unshakable faith in the righteousness of his cause. His triumphal entry into Mecca without shedding a drop of blood, would have done credit to any military commander. It was the triumph of the spirit over brutal force. He fled and fought for Allah, and His Cause eventually triumphed. Thus the Prophet, being Allah's Great Commander, is one of the greatest commanders in the world's history.

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## TWENTY YEARS AGO

### AT THE FEET OF MUHAMMAD<sup>1</sup>

BY DR. AMEEN NEVILLE J. WHYMANT, PH.D. OF OXFORD

The stars shine clear o'er the desert wide,  
The moon smiles down in peace,  
And the gossamer veil of eventide  
Gives night from day release,  
And on my ear fall words so fragrant and sweet :  
At the feet of Muhammad East and West meet.

The Yogi and Swami, Rishi too,  
Bow to Allah the One.  
And Christian and Buddhist and Hindu  
Unite when day is done,  
Together to pray and together repeat :  
At the feet of Muhammad East and West meet.

While clearly the Mosque lamp is burning.  
Their voices whisper low,  
In the tongue of Romance and Learning,  
The truths that all men should know.  
Then let us arise and the new message greet :  
At the feet of Muhammad East and West meet.

<sup>1</sup> *Islamic Review*, November 1914.



## ISLAMIC REVIEW

### ACRIMU-AL-HIRRAH !—RESPECT THE CAT<sup>1</sup>

BY H. MUSTAFA HENRI M. LEON, PH.D, LL.D.

Hast heard the story, how one summer's day,  
Within a mosque a cat once hap'd to stray,  
Just at the time God's Prophet had gone there,  
To make, as was his wont, the Zuhar prayer ?  
With measured tread, it step'd with noiseless feet,  
And, 'fore God's Prophet, calmly took its seat,

And purring gently, sat there calm and still,  
Afraid of naught, suspicious of no ill,  
When lo ! by Allah's will, e'er wise and good,  
The cat was seized with pains of motherhood,  
And 'twixt its pangs, common to all of earth,  
There in the mosque, to kittens three gave birth.

" Remove the brute," then loudly one did cry,  
" To thus pollute the mosque, sure it should die."  
" Say not such words," God's Prophet then did say,  
" Remove it not, in peace let it here stay,  
" Do not a thing its feelings now to jar,  
" Respect the cat, *Acrimu-al-hirrah* ! "

This cat hath only done that which it should,  
And hath performed its work of motherhood,  
What Allah hath decreed for all the race,  
As Nature's law, sure can be no disgrace ;  
And Muslims learn from this the lesson, that  
Allah doth teach to all, Respect the Cat !

Thy father honour, and thy brother love,  
Protect thy sister, but of all above,  
Respect thy mother, she it was who bare  
Thee in her womb, and lavished on thee care  
Known but to Allah ; Muslims think of that,  
This cat a mother is, " Respect the cat ! "

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## JUST OUT

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<sup>1</sup> *Islamic Review*, December 1914.

## THE PROPHET OF PEACE

## THE PROPHET OF PEACE

BY S. M. RAHMAN, M.L.C.

The wanton misrepresentation of the teachings of the Holy Messenger of Arabia is the most dismal chapter of modern history. To those who have studied the life of the Holy Prophet through tainted sources, the caption of this article is likely to sound paradoxical. It is a sad commentary on the so-called era of enlightenment that the religion whose very name signifies peace and which heralded the dawn of human brotherhood should be looked upon as an embodiment of intolerance. The reason for this perverted and myopic perspective of the history of Islam is not far to seek.

The practical appeal of the simple Islamic creed, which was a reaction against the impracticable asceticism of Christianity and its elaborate ritual, had a quick, wide and far-flung appeal. This phenomenon naturally induced people to ascribe the extraordinary success of Islam to the sword.

The facts are, if one cares to study them, that when Christianity was waging wars for the sole purpose of subjugating the surrounding nations, when the followers of Jesus Christ were burning alive people for their belief or disbelief, when Inquisitions were the order of the day in Europe, Islam preached a philosophy of tolerance, which evokes our admiration, even to-day. The wars waged by the Prophet were always launched upon in self-defence. The Holy Prophet had commanded his followers to draw the sword only when it became imperatively necessary for self-protection. A few Qur-ánic verses, which are given below, will convince every reasonable man that toleration, good-will and amity with the non-Muslims were unequivocally ordained by Islamic Scriptures :—

Let there be no compulsion in Religion ; now is the right way made distinct from error.

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And say to those who have been given the Book and the illiterates (those who need guidance in the path of God): Do ye accept Islam? Then if they accept Islam they are guided, but if they turn aside, then upon thee is only to preach, and Allah sees his servants.

Reville not those who call on besides Allah, lest they in their ignorance spitefully revile Him.

Say: O ye people, now is come to you the Truth from your Lord; whoever is guided, is guided only for himself and whosoever goeth astray, doth so only against himself.

Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation and have disputation with them in the kindest way.

But: say "This is the Truth from your Lord," so let him who will believe, and let him who will disbelieve.

But if they turn aside, we have not sent thee over them as a guardian; "upon thee is only to preach."

Nor art thou over them to compel; but warn by the Qur-án who fear the threat.

Then withdraw from him who turns his back upon Our Warning and desires only the life of the world.

And among every people we have raised a Messenger.

There is no nation but there has passed among them a warner.

We have sent no Apostle but with the Language of his people, that he may clear up his message to them.

Already we have sent Apostles before thee, and of them are some of whom we have mentioned to thee and there are others of whom we have not mentioned to thee.

Say: we believe in what is revealed to us and what has been revealed to you, and our God and your God is one.

Even if certain Muslim rulers did not adequately honour and strictly observed the above-mentioned principles of toleration, Islam cannot be blamed. There is no religion in the world whose preachings and precepts have been strictly followed by its followers. You cannot judge the teachings of a Prophet by the actual practices of his numerous votaries and followers. If we were to judge every religion by this unattainable standard, it would be found that Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism, in fact all the great religions of the world, have been utter failures. Who does not know that the religion of



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Christ was meant to be a religion of peace ? How far his followers have followed the exhortations of the Prince of Peace, is evident from the countless bloody wars that dye the pages of European history. The first principle of Buddhism was *Ahimsa* and, even the man in the street knows how extensively *Himsa* is practised in Buddhistic countries like China and Japan. Bhagavat Gita preaches a sublime philosophy of action. It teaches the aspirant to lift himself from the lower levels of renunciations, where objects are renounced, to the loftier heights, where desires are dead and where the Yogi dwells in calm and ceaseless contemplation, while his body and mind are actively employed in discharging the duties that fall to his lot in life. While this has been the principle sermon of the Hindu Scripture, the Aryan mind has been busy, through the ages, in metaphysical speculations. As has been aptly described by a well known poet :—

The East bowed low before the blast  
In silent, deep disdain  
She let the legions thunder pass  
And plunged in thought again.

It is preposterous to think that Islam or any other religion, whose sole object is the dissemination of its doctrines, can afford to preach intolerance. Bodies may be kept down by the sword for some time, and history teaches us that it is not possible to do even this for all time ; but it is impossible to control the minds of men by sheer brute force. At a time when Europe is making every effort to bring about a *cordiale entente* between the nations of the world, it is necessary to clear our minds of all the exaggerated notions of Islamic intolerance, for without understanding the truths of the great Faith of Asia and Africa mankind cannot attain peace.

## THE CHIEF OF THE PROPHETS

By

SYED M. H. ZAIDI

Muhammad was born in the city of Mecca, on the 12th of Rabi I, corresponding to the 29th of August of the 570th year of the Christian era. The Prophet was of high birth, being of the family of Beni Hashem, the Princes of their country, the noblest of the Qureish tribe of Arabia, which for several descents together had been the chief ruling tribe of the country. His grandfather was the custodian of the Kaaba. Such was the family in which the Holy Prophet of Islam was born.

He was fatherless from birth, he lost his mother when only six and his grandfather when he was hardly nine. Notwithstanding his high birth and noble parentage he was thus left poor, an orphan boy. He was adopted and brought up with utmost care and tenderness by his uncle Abu Talib who took him to Syria on a commercial expedition of a thousand miles by camel caravan at an age when a child is expected to be sent to school for acquiring knowledge, receiving training. But he was doomed to stumble down in deserts. Camel-tracks in the sand were his only alphabet, and the tales of raiding and brigandage of merchants and might of Arab tribes, told round the caravan fires at night, his only history and adventure book.

While on a halt at Busara, he met Buhaira, an Arab monk of Christian faith, who, fixing his scrutinising gaze upon the young traveller, was so wonder-struck by the signs of future grandeur and splendour of his intellectual and moral qualities that he at once recognised in the orphan boy the future saviour of mankind. Accordingly the monk impressed his convictions on Abu Talib saying: "Return with your young charge, protect him from Jewish treachery and guard him from the machinations of his

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enemies ; for great dignity awaits your nephew and truly he is born to achieve great things."

Just at the birth of Muhammad, his mother's brother, who himself was an astrologer, predicted that Muhammad would rise to a vast power, build a mighty empire and establish a new faith among men.

The predictions of his maternal uncle, the convictions of the Christian monk, the prophecy of Jesus Christ and the Prayer of Abraham were fully justified in the event of Muhammad's becoming the chosen Messenger of God, to redeem humanity from sins and ignorance, unite the discordant heart of Arabia as the heart of one man and teach to the world that "There is no Deity but Allah."

Under the tender care of his uncle Muhammad grew up a handsome boy, and his most amiable qualities and sweet and gentle disposition won him the affection of all who happened to come in contact with him. But from his early youth he was quiet and reserved, thoughtful and of reflective mind and given to pensive meditation. When his companions wished him to join them in their amusements, he would say : "Man is created for a nobler purpose than indulgence in frivolous pursuits."

In the prime of manhood he was handsome and of proper stature, square-built and sinewy, joints well-knit together, with hands and feet large, shoulders broad, and the chest open and wide. He had a firm and healthy constitution, and was uncommonly strong and vigorous. He was of spare figure, carrying presence with it, of majestic aspect, comely presence and an engaging address on the whole. His head was massive and well-shaped, his forehead noble and high, broad at the temples and across it, down to the eyebrow ran a prominent vein, a feature of the Hashemites, which used to swell and throb when he was angry or excited. He had a frank oval face, marked and expressive features, brows noble, arched and joined ; a



Napoleonic nose, finely chiselled and attenuated at the end. His eyes were large, black and piercing, full of the lustre of the light of prophecy, and his peculiar magnetic power, and fringed with eyelashes dark and long. His cheeks were thin and ruddy with robust health, and mouth large and flexible, indicative of eloquence with graceful smile; and the teeth pearl-white and regular. His neck was long and well-moulded which rose like a pillar from his ample chest; his hair was jet-black, soft and curly and fell down to his shoulders; and his voice sweet and sonorous. He had a beard long and full, and moustache that added dignity to his appearance. His complexion was very fair and ruddy, and his skin clear and soft. He was in his steps quick and firm like that of one descending a hill, and when he walked he made use of a staff after the manner of the prophets.

Now as to his moral and intellectual perfection, and natural gifts and virtues. He was a man of attractive personal attainments with beautiful qualities; he had an acute and sagacious wit, powerful retentive memory, quick apprehension, vivid imagination, a calm and equable deportment, majestic mien and bearing, a patriotic spirit and steadfast perseverance, a genius to command and expect obedience from equals as well as inferiors; he had an undaunted courage, serious, sincere character, capable of real amiability, a very acceptable address, elevation of mind, delicacy and refinement of feeling. He was simple, kind and tolerant in his domestic life, attractive in his manner, sympathetic with those in trouble, kind and considerate to his friends and family, and a tender father and a generous husband. He was a man of excellent judgment, sweet and pleasant in conversation, inoffensive in behaviour towards his friends, and of great condescension towards his inferiors; he was very courteous both in giving and receiving visits and he was a very great lover of children; he would stop them in the streets, pat them on

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their little heads, speak a few kind words to them; he expressed disgust at a man who having ten children declared that he had never kissed one of them, and he hated nothing more than lying. He was in fact a solid, dependable, brotherly, genuine man, affectionate and magnanimous and austere in his religious practices, brave and zealous with a clear conception of the work that lay before him, and he was above reproach in his personal and family conduct. Usually he was grave and dignified, taciturn and reserve, yet he indulged in pleasantry and in congenial company he did unbend and enter into the social pleasure of his family, friends and disciples alike. He was sober and abstemious in his diet, and with no magnificence in the matter of dress which was always of cotton and sometimes of wool, often coarse and patched. He abhorred strong drinks. He was very scrupulous about personal cleanliness and ablutions. He had the genius alike to influence the learned and equals and command the illiterate and inferiors, and soothe the great men with praise and relieve the poor with gift. His applaudable commanding presence, his ready eloquence, and charming aspects always engaged on his side the attention of public and private audience alike, and he gained many over to his side, as much by the charm of his manners as by the doctrines he preached, and we find that he was able to control self-willed and masterful persons like Khalid and Omar.

His unconquerable will, unshakeable resolve, fixedness of purpose, thorough-going perseverance, unyielding persistency, indomitable spirit, interminable patience, calm endurance, irresistible courage, and the stamp of the nobility of character that he bore, mark the special features of the life of that Great Arabian Prophet.

His admirable politeness to the great, his applaudable affability to the humble, his dignified demeanour to the

presumptuous, his universal benevolence and courtesy, his equable treatment to friends and strangers, the powerful and the weak ; his respectful attention to the rich, his generosity to the poor, naturally endeared him to those who came in contact with him, and procured him respect, admiration and applause.

His uprightness of character, and correctness of demeanour and his honest dealings with the people won him the love of friend and foe alike, and exalted him over the rest of his countrymen so that by common consent he was called *Al-Amin*—The Faithful, The Trusty, long before he became the chosen Messenger of God the Almighty. In short, from the standpoint of physical and moral purity, natural gifts and qualities, Muhammad was in every sense the essence.

Muhammad began his prophetic career when he was 40 years of age....In order to realise the stupendousness of his work it is necessary to have a knowledge of the condition of Arabia of his times. He came at a time of much mental agitation in Arabia. The Arabs and the Jews outvied each other in superstition, idolatry and moral depravity. The greater part of Christendom was steeped in abject credulity. Belief in the illogical supposition that 3 is 1 was considered to be the sole means of salvation. The Church of Christ was rent by factions, and false teachings prevailed. The world had in fact entered the Church. Muhammad lived at a time when Christianity was a flower that had been plucked to adorn the temple of idolatry. Not only were the nations sunk in idol-worship, but Christianity itself had become so contaminated with paganism that a mere lip acknowledgment of God was confounded by the false declaration that God was a trinity of persons, in plain words, that there were three gods: a doctrine which is as idolatrous as belief in any of the pagan deities. Not only



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had the Kaaba within it 360 idols affording the worshippers a separate god with every new sun, but each tribe had a battalion of other images and fetishes which served the purpose of a family or personal deity, and in addition to these people approached reverentially every white and beautiful stone they chanced to come across. They worshipped the sun, the moon, the stars, fire and water and heaps of sand where stone could not be found. In short they worshipped anything that appealed to their imagination and sought a god behind every natural event. To the independent haughty Arab, there could be no law, for they yielded to no rule, no government, no justice; for they acknowledged no supreme authority, and roved through boundless desert and enjoyed unfettered freedom. And there could be no progress, for there was no plan acceptable to these Arabs, full of cunning and subtle knavery, the untamable race of all the world, wild haters of towns, dwellers of wilderness, who despised and scorned the very comforts of a civilised life. This was the state of affairs in Arabia—the blasphemy against God, the degenerate Christianity of his time and the polytheism of the Arabs—among which he lived. The unmitigated evil of the fetish worship, social evils such as the burying alive of girls, and promiscuous sex relations, the tribal blood-feuds and wars, the rough and dangerous life of fervour and fighting, looting and brigandage, and consequent national weakness of his own people aroused the gentle soul of Muhammad and set him abrooding gloomily over these evils prevalent at the time.

Now in considering distinctly and briefly as to how Muhammad shaped the destiny of his people by civilizing the Arabs in as many tens of years as Christianity required thousands to civilize its Teutons; and how the seeds were sown almost of every development political, intellectual, moral and spiritual; and how the religion was established in the unprecedented period of twenty years, without the

aid of any royal patronage and support; how without parallel in the history of humanity the rapid victorious spread of Islam was effected; why Islam met with so unexampled a reception in the world; why multitudes of converts swelled the ranks of the faith—one has but to refer to the simplicity of the creed which has been ever a part of its charm—the pure, rigid, austere monotheism—a belief in the One absolute God, which alone renders Islam feasible—free from priestcraft or elaborate doctrinal trappings; the noble doctrine of the duty of man to man, of man to lower creatures; and the universal peace, kindly feeling and good-will towards each other that it teaches; the profound conviction of the Unity of God that it creates in men; the fraternity, the republic of equality of all men, irrespective of colour, race, nationality and class; the equal support and consolation and peace of mind that it so unreservedly gives to all who believe and confess; and the sobriety, general good and admirable morals which it inculcates; the genuine conviction kindled by the spectacle of its victorious strength; its moral and spiritual stability; its chastening and ennobling ideas; its calling into activity many of the noblest forces in the nature of men; and on the whole patriarchal piety and moral rectitude of the believers which are the strongest recommendation to the seekers after truth and are among the most obvious forces at work in the religious and missionary activities of Islam whose system, as a whole, is capable of lending itself to a very vital force of religious life and has a commanding appeal to its immense range of followers, the appeal of loyalty to a man, to a message, and to a brotherhood.

The last and the mighty proclamation of the Great Arabian Prophet, the very essence and personification of centralization and concord, was that “an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor has a non-Arab any superiority over an Arab. You all are the children of

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man, and man sprang from the dust. Every Muslim is a brother unto another Muslim ; all Muslims are brethren."

It is a tribute to this message of human equality and of human fraternity that Islam has no sects diametrically opposed to each other like other religions, say, Christianity, which has now well over four hundred sects. The sole nursery of lofty thoughts and noble actions lie in the conception of the equality of man before God, and it was Islam that at last conceived it first. All creatures that are made by him are brothers bound together by indivisible kinship. Islamic fraternity has an international spirit and if ever the impossible becomes actual it does become by its marvellous touch. Islam gave in the ultimate form the most perfect description of brotherhood, the equality of all men, pulling down one and all barriers of rank and of race, of birth and of breeding.

No student of religions with profundity of knowledge and convictions would find the same spirit of equality in other religions. We see the present day facts that among the Hindus a rigid caste system is rampant everywhere. They believe that the people of certain caste are born from the head of the Creator, others from the hands and feet and some from limbs which it would be indecorous and indecent to mention here. In Judaism and Christianity, which claim sisterhood with Islam, we find that the former rejoices in considering the Israelites only to be the chosen people of God while in the latter a particular terminology "native Christians" is coined by the Christian priests to distinguish them from their more lucky brothers who were born in Europe.

Colour or race, make no difference to it. Islam, in fact, is above all such petty differences. She draws no hard and fast rules, has no such violent antipathies, bigotries and prejudices as Christendom or other religious systems. Colour in her eyes is no disgrace, no bar to



God, much less, therefore, to human fellowship and assimilation.

\* \* \* \* \*

Muhammad is an historical character. We know him as a neighbour, a father and a son. We know him as a husband, a businessman, and a friend—no truer friend than Muhammad ever lived—who was never first to withdraw his hand from the grasp of another who offered him his. We know him as a teacher, a reformer, and a master whom it was alike impossible to disobey and impossible not to love and who wept like a child on the death of his faithful servant. We know him as a gentleman, a warrior, and a general. We know him as a noble, a saint and a prince, but above all petty differences and superior to titles and ceremonies. We know him as a camel driver, as the *Al-Amin*, and as the Prophet, but he never claimed the power of working miracles; we know him as a legislator, a Cæsar and a Pope but he was Pope without Pope's pretensions and Cæsar without the legion of Cæsar, without a standing army, without a body guard, without a palace, without a fixed revenue. If ever a man had the right to say that he ruled by a right divine, it was Muhammad; for he had all the power without its instrument and without its support. Further, we know him as a man of uncommon genius, poor by his own choice so that when lord over the whole of Arabia he did not even build a brickhouse for himself. Personal ambition and aggrandizement never entered his mind, lordly airs he never assumed, nor personal services he ever demanded. From the beginning to the end with the simplicity natural to a great mind he loved to perform the humblest of the offices of his daily life. Just imagine, the Lord of Arabia tended the flock, milked the goats, swept the hearth, kindled the fire, patched the garment, and even mended his sandals. Dates and barley bread were his usual fare, and milk and honey all his luxuries. His frugal hut and the leathern

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mat to sleep upon were all his household appointments and the luxury and splendour of an Oriental despot; we know him as a poet, but illiterate himself, scarcely able to read or write, he was yet the author of a Book which is a poem, a code of laws, a book of common prayer, and a Bible in one, and is revered to this day by a sixth of the whole human race as a miracle of style, of wisdom, and of truth. It is one miracle claimed by Muhammad—his standing miracle he called it, and a miracle indeed it is.

The Holy Qur-án, on the one hand, is most unsparing in its condemnation of debauchery, hatred, calumny and slander, pride, envy, vainglory, falsehood, revengefulness, mockery, hypocrisy, avarice, uncharitable judgment, prodigality, mistrust, and suspicion, bloodshedding, usury, slavery, persecution, polygamy, thirsting after worldly good, and excesses of every description, while on the other hand, it is emphatic in insisting on the virtues of benevolence, almsgiving, liberality, patience, charity without any distinction of caste and creed, temperance, modesty, courage, faith, humility, frugality, straightforwardness, endurance, submission, toleration, mildness, justice, especially towards orphans and widows without respect of persons, filial piety, obedience to divine commandments, gratitude towards God, fidelity to engagements, ransoming of captives, forgiveness of injuries, love of peace and truth, decency in speech, returning good for evil, showing kindness to strangers, and above all the Holy Qur-án enjoins in most emphatic terms that Muslims “should implicitly obey and yield to the ruler or government of the time in observing strictly the laws promulgated.” In view of this Qur-ánic injunction a Muslim taking part in thwarting the government of his time and disobeying the laws of his ruler not only infringes the laws of his government, but also makes a clear departure from his religious obligations, and disobeys the commands of his Holy Prophet, and thereby rankshimself among the infidels.

It is due to these merits that from the Atlantic to the Ganges the Holy Qur-án of Islam is acknowledged as a pot-pourri of pure, elevated and benignant precepts, just and benevolent sentiments, lofty feelings of humanity, fundamental code of theology, legal statutes—civil and criminal jurisprudence—military organisation, a deep moral earnestness, sententious oracular wisdom and elements on which mighty nations and conquering empires can be built up, and the Qur-án is a friend of the poor on the whole.

Furthermore, the Holy Qur-án admittedly occupies the most important position among all the religious books of the world ; it deserves the highest praise for its conception of the Divine Nature ; it is the most widely read of all sacred scriptures on the face of our Globe ; it is the only Book that teaches a rigid and austere and purer and stricter Monotheism than the Books of all the Religious Systems of the Universe and as such “ this book will go on exercising a most potent influence.” Its influence one day would invariably succeed in controlling the lives of all human races as one. It will stand as a stupendous monument of solitary legislation and proclaim the miracle of style and poetic genius of its Author.

I make bold to say that a careful reader of the Qur-án and an inquiring mind cannot come to conclusion other than accept the true and reasonable tenets of the Holy Book of Islam as the most suitable to our time and age ; a man who should observe them would lead a virtuous life. And this is, I presume, the highest ideal of human existence. Islam is more suited to our world than any other faith. Islam has elements in itself that would most adequately satisfy and administer to the exigencies of our time and age. I venture to say that if the world in its wisdom feels the necessity of a religion, Islam is the only rational and peaceful faith that a sane man can accept, and boast of being one of its fortunate votaries.



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We read that every Prophet had a standing virtue, a characteristic of himself to distinguish himself from the masses. But Muhammad in his quality of Prophet united in himself the meekness of Abraham, the sincerity of Moses, the trustworthiness of Ishmael, the patience of Jacob, the humility of Solomon, and the abstinence of Jesus which differentiated him not only from his compatriots, but likewise eminently exalted him above all the famous prophets of the Old Testament or the other prophets the history of humanity has ever known.

Thus Muhammad is manifold founder of a nation, of a religion, of an empire, and of a republic of Islamic fraternity. He established for the first time in history a united Arabia, founded an empire with self-supporting elements and strength in itself; he established a religion—Islam—with a book, the Qur-án, the Muslim Gospel, which is the glorious testimony to the Unity of God, and whose creed is free from ambiguity or suspicion.

Muhammad stands unparalleled on the pinnacle of renown as a man, as a hero, as a saint, as the most successful of all the prophets and religious personalities, as the chosen and the seal and the last of all the prophets.

If only one of the many reforms, for example, the Islamic Brotherhood, inaugurated by the Holy Prophet of Islam were to be taken into consideration, his being the true benefactor of mankind must be admitted by all; and the Great Arabian Prophet must be loved and honoured by all for his valiant championship of "*making brutes men and men divine.*"

## MUHAMMAD'S APOSTLESHIP

Before discussing the validity of Muhammad's claim to Divine mission, we must solve the question, "What constitutes the real criterion of Apostleship?" Broadly speaking, two criteria of prophethood have been prevalent in the world:—

(1) Performance of miracles by a claimant, *i.e.*, if he displays super-human actions, we are led to believe that he is divinely gifted and hence he is a messenger of God.

(2) Reasonableness and purity of a claimant's teachings and actions, *i.e.*, if we by an impartial examination of his words and deeds come to the conclusion that he stands for a right cause and guides humanity or a section of it to a right course in all spheres of life, then we pronounce our judgment in favour of his claim.

Needless to say that the second criterion takes a more rational view of the case than the first. The first which is liable to a variety of objections (such as, counterclaims by magicians and sorcerers, etc.) will hardly be accepted by the modern world. The second may, therefore, be taken as a safe criterion of prophethood.

Muslim doctors and divines are also divided on the question of the criterion, some favouring the first and others the second. Razi says:—

Believers in prophethood are divided into two groups. One holds that miracles prove a man's claim to apostleship, whereas the other maintains that we should first set up a criterion of truth both with regard to belief and observances and then we should see whether the man in question seeks to guide the people to the right path, and also whether he is capable of influencing them in the choice of right. If he satisfies the above condition, we are led to believe that he is a true prophet.<sup>1</sup>

Ibn-i-Khaldūn in his well-known *Muqaddama* (Prolegomena) divides mankind into three classes:—

(1) Perfect beings who are divinely gifted and have successfully realised the aims of life and reached the Destination.

<sup>1</sup>Matalib-i-Āliyah.

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(2) Middle-class people who are travelling along the road leading to the Destination.

(3) Worthless men who are at a standstill or have gone into degeneration.

Naturally, Divine messengers belong to the first class of mankind. They having reached the Destination take up the noble task of leading the masses to the right path and guarding them against evil.

After keeping in view the true criterion of prophethood as discussed above, the question "Does Muhammad satisfy the conditions of prophethood?" becomes easy of solution; provided, of course, we study his life and teachings in an impartial and unprejudiced manner and without any personal and racial considerations.

A comparison of the Pre-Islamic condition of Arabia in all its aspects with the condition obtaining there at the time of Muhammad's death will undoubtedly convince even the most stubborn critic of the genuineness of Muhammad's claim to the Divine mission. Can there be any shadow of doubt about the prophethood of one who, himself unschooled and unlettered, reformed the character of one of the most licentious peoples on the face of the earth, who purged Arabia of all its evils and vices, who grouped together the warring camps of the Arabs into one great commonwealth, who established one Universal Brotherhood with One God to worship, one Code of Law to follow, who purified the mode of living introducing decency and nicety in every walk of life, who clearly defined the standard of morality, who equalised rights and privileges for men and women, and last but not the least who regulated human life in all its spheres in the most rational and practical way?

I may refer here only to one aspect of the life-career of the Prophet of Islam, *viz.*, sense of equality and absence of self-exaltation. Muhammad was born as a poor orphan



and died as an undisputed master of Arabia. Between these two extremes he had to pass through various stages of life, but history testifies that at every stage he was one and the same. We do not find a grain of difference between Muhammad the Orphan and Muhammad the recognised leader of the land. Humility, purity and sanctity characterised every turn of his life.

An obedient son, a devoted husband, an affectionate father, a faithful companion, a sincere friend, a successful leader, a thorough gentleman and above all a practical man, he inspired respect and admiration even in the minds of his bitterest enemies. The late Khwaja Kamál-ud-Din of Woking fame rightly observes in his masterpiece, entitled *The Ideal Prophet* :

Muhammad is the best exemplar, and, I may say, the only Prophet who himself worked out all principles he taught to others. Whatever he taught to others, he practised himself.

One of the chief causes of the rapid success of Islam was the absence of distinction between the Prophet and his followers. Muhammad was both a leader and a follower, a commander and a soldier. Never did he issue any order which he himself did not carry out. It is natural that we are tempted to follow a leader who is one of our own rather than one who is above us and beyond our reach. Jesus poorly failed in his mission, simply because he appeared or was represented as super-man, and the people found it impossible to follow in his footsteps. We can adore a super-man, we may even worship him; but we cannot possibly follow him. Muhammad repeatedly warned the Believers against paying him more respect than was due to him. God says in the Qur-án :—

Say (O Muhammad) verily I am a man like unto you (and) it is revealed to me that your Lord is One.

This is why we find that Muhammad issued repeated warning against the practice of "prophet-worship." In

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one of the Traditions he is reported to have said :

Do not respect me in the way in which the Christians respected the son of Mary. Verily, I am Allah's slave ; and speak of me as the slave of God and His Prophet.

This unequalled amiability and humility of the founder of Islam was not confined to the fold of the Believers only. Non-Muslims were also entitled to the same generous considerations of the Prophet. Hardpressed by tortures and persecutions at the hands of the infidels, the Believers requested the Prophet to invite the Divine wrath upon the persecutors ; but he replied magnanimously saying : “ I have come here as a blessing to humanity, not as a curse.”

A European Muslim, formerly a Christian, in the course of an article entitled “ Islam, My Only Choice ” published in the *Islamic Review*, says :—

My surprise knew no bounds when I began to read of Muhammad. Like a panorama the events of his life passed before my eyes one after the other. From the cradle to the grave everything of note in his life is narrated and preserved in a well-authenticated record. I was amazed to find in him an assemblage of the best of characteristics so rare in others. I am at a loss to understand how he could unite in himself all the best qualities of discrepant characters. He is meek and at the same time courageous ; modest as a maiden but the bravest of the soldiers on a battlefield. While with children, loved for his playfulness and endearing talk to the little ones ; when in the company of sages and old men, respected for his wisdom and farsightedness. Truthful, honest, trustworthy, a reliable friend, loving father and husband, a dutiful son, and a helpful brother, Muhammad is the same man whether in adversity or prosperity. In short, judge Muhammad from whatever angle of human character you will, and he is nowhere wanting.

The late Syed Amir Ali while describing the events of Prophet Muhammad's life at Mecca says in his *Spirit of Islam* :—“ We have seen this wonderful man (Muhammad) as an orphan child who had never known a father's love, bereft in infancy of a mother's care, his early life so full of pathos, growing up from a thoughtful childhood to a still more thoughtful youth. His youth as pure and true as

his boyhood; his manhood as austere and devout as his youth. His ear ever open to the sorrows and sufferings of the weak and poor; his heart ever full of sympathy and tenderness towards all God's creatures. He walks so humbly and so purely, that men turn round and point 'there goes *Al-Amin*, the true, the upright, the trusty.' A faithful friend, a devoted husband; a thinker intent on the mysteries of life and death, on the responsibilities of human actions, the end and aim of human existence,—he sets himself to the task of reclaiming and reforming a nation—nay, a world, with only one loving heart to comfort and solace him. Baffled, he never falters; beaten, he never despairs. He struggles on with indomitable spirit to achieve the work assigned to him."

MUZAFFAR-UD-DIN NADVI.

## THE MERCIFUL MUHAMMAD

BY KHWAJA SALAH-UD-DIN AHMAD

And not alike are the good and the evil. Repel (evil) with what is best, when lo! he between whom and you was enmity would be as if he were a warm friend. And none are made to receive it but those who are patient, and none are made to receive it but those who have a mighty fortune. And if an interference of the devil should cause you mischief, seek refuge in Allah, surely He is Hearing, the Knowing<sup>1</sup>.

And the recompense of evil is punishment like it, but whoever forgives and amends, he shall have his reward from Allah, surely He does not love the unjust. And whoever defends himself after his being oppressed, these it is against whom there is no way (to blame). The way (to blame) is only against those who oppress men and revolt in the earth unjustly, these shall have a painful chastisement. And whoever is patient and forgiving, that most surely is of the affairs the doing of which should be determined upon.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Holy Qur-ān, 41 : 34—36.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 42 : 40—43.



## THE MERCIFUL MUHAMMAD

Muhammad stands out prominent in having successfully established the unity of Allah. It implies two most difficult operations : eradicating idolatry of long standing which had become part and parcel of the nature of the Arabs, and imparting instruction in the Oneness of God. The stronger the hold of a false doctrine on the hearts of a nation, the more vigorous and patient endeavours does it call for on the part of a reformer. The Apostle of Allah displayed a marvellously sympathetic and resolute heart in undertaking the correction of a nation which was passionately given to idolatry and superstition. His grim determination and untiring zeal for the extermination of the worship of fetishes called forth an equally violent and terrible opposition. Every tribe adored its own idol, and manifested vehement indignation in standing up for the vindication of its traditions. The whole of Arabia made common cause and rose in war against Islam, which stood for consummate obedience to Divine laws ingrained in human nature and codified in the Qur-án. The terribly hot opposition assumed the form of active persecutions, especially when the Arabian Prophet had been pursued into Medina. He had to experience, indeed, a very rough time of it. The Qur-án sketches the doleful picture which necessitated struggle on the defensive :—

“ Why should ye not fight in the path of Allah, and for the weak among men, women, and children who say, ‘ O, our Lord, bring us forth from this city whose inhabitants are oppressors ; give us a champion from Thy presence, a defender ! ’ ”

Invaded on all sides by the belligerents, he was constrained to take the field occasionally or to send out his men to meet aggressors. The chequered career of reverses and successes provided an excellent opportunity for manifesting the various phases of the character of the Prophet. No trying circumstances, no ordeal, no violent

opposition could keep him from working in the direction of the unity of Allah. When successful no recollection of atrocities inflicted on him and his companions was ever too strong for preventing him from meting out kindness and forgiveness to the vanquished foe. It is by dint of his noble character and genuine sympathy that he cherished for mankind, and mercy that he showed to the enemy, that people crowded to Islam. Compulsion engenders hypocrisy, and has nothing in common with sincerity. The followers of Muhammad have always signalised themselves for their devotion to Muhammad and Islam. This speaks for the charm that the doctrines possess, and refutes the baseless charge that Islam was spread at the point of the sword.

The following episode occurred in the seventh year of the Flight, when the concerted forces of the Jews and and convulsions. The treacherous treatment that was designed to extinguish the life of their Divine leader, and that brought about the sudden and tragic death of one of the choicest flowers of Islam, made the camp indignant and furious beyond bounds. The scene can better be imagined than described. The enraged and victorious hosts demanded instant retaliation.

Ordinary commanders are carried away by the tide of strong feelings of their men. Nay, they seek pretexts for committing violence and pillaging the fallen folk. But Muhammad was pre-eminent in enjoying freedom from such diplomatic craft. He had already granted them quarter, and would be true to his word even at the cost of heavy price. He sent for the conspirators and required them to state the entire plot. They were reluctant in disclosing the story and attempted in vain to throw Muhammad off the track. At last the culprit admitted her guilt. Now think of the present war and wanton violence that has been incessantly practised

## THE MERCIFUL MUHAMMAD

on the slightest pretexts, and think of Muhammad, whose own life was threatened, who was victorious and in a position to inflict exemplary punishment on the miscreants, and who was pressed by his hosts to meet out exemplary punishment to the ungrateful foe. What should he do now ? Could he not consult his convenience and his furious followers ? Could he forgive without incurring the displeasure of his comrades, who were justified in vindicating vengeance for mean perfidy ? Should he not avail himself of the opportunity that offered for compelling the people to embrace Islam ? The Holy Prophet Muhammad was invincible to all such impulses. He was possessed of a remarkably strong but charitable character. He considered the question and forgave the offender. Even the hostile writers have had to record this memorable event, which is so eloquent of the idolatrous Arabs were defeated at Khaibar, and the town fell. Merciful and magnanimous as he was, Muhammad extended general forgiveness, and assured the disbelievers of the safety of their life and property. He sojourned there for three days, and before quitting the place for Medina he fell a prey to a conspiracy.

The mercy and kindness that the humiliated inhabitants of the fallen city met with at the hands of the Prophet was requited in a very cruel and cowardly manner. They conspired to kill him. They knew his virtues. He was very sociable, had no arrogance about him and readily reposed confidence even in the vanquished foe. They contrived to beseech him to accept a gift of roasted mutton. The Prophet would not disappoint them. They felt overjoyed, and readily set to work to give effect to their shameless scheme. A fanatic was selected for the discharge of the task. Zainab, who boasted descent from a well-known warlike family and whose uncle Marhab had suffered a very crushing defeat in the recent battle—Ali having cloven his skull with his heavy scimitar—



was agreed upon as the right instrument. The exasperated lady, in whose bosom fanaticism was rivalling with thirst for wreaking vengeance, used her craft in charging the roasted mutton with the deadliest poison, concentrating it mostly in the shoulder, which she came to know the Prophet liked the best. The plot was almost successful, and the Apostle was near falling a helpless victim to it. The viand was placed before him and his adherents. The Prophet partook a small quantity and then spat it out, instinctively as it were. But Bashar, who had been demonstrating wonderful feats of strength and prowess in the field of battle fell prostrate on the spot. A warrior, who was adamant against sword and spear, fell an easy prey to the guiles of a vile wretch. His death-struggle was unbearable ; he expired in the midst of writhes various aspects of the noble heart of The Holy Prophet. Undoubtedly it argues an incredibly large patriarchal heart. To such irresistible and fascinating traits of the Apostle Islam owes its rapid spread and diffusion. The ignorant critic does not realise that this is a far sharper instrument than the sword to break the stiffness of disbelief.

Muhammad was not a man who would only theories and talk of "humanity" and "forgiveness". In his life one studies everything practised, and his precept invariably coupled with his personal example presents a personality which is gloriously ideal. The Qur-án is justified in depicting him as an exemplary character :—

"Verily a noble pattern had ye in Allah's Apostle, for all who hope in Allah and in the latter day and oft remember Allah."—The Holy Qur-án, 33 : 21.

## WHAT IS ISLAM ?

### WHAT IS ISLAM ?

[The following is a very brief account of Islam, and some of its teachings. For further details, please write to the IMAM of the Mosque, Woking, Surrey, England.]

**ISLAM, THE RELIGION OF PEACE.**—The word Islam literally means: (1) Peace; (2) the way to achieve peace; (3) submission; as submission to another's will is the safest course to establish peace. The word in its religious sense signifies complete submission to the Will of God.

**OBJECT OF THE RELIGION.**—Islam provides its followers with the perfect code whereby they may work out what is noble and good in man, and thus maintain peace between man and man.

**THE PROPHET OF ISLAM.**—Muhammad, popularly known as the Prophet of Islam, is however, the last of the Prophets. Muslims, i.e., the followers of Islam, accept all such of the world's Prophets, including Abraham, Moses and Jesus, as revealed the Will of God for the guidance of humanity.

**THE QUR-AN.**—The Gospel of the Muslim is the Qur-án. Muslims believe in the Divine origin of every other sacred book, inasmuch as all such previous revelations have become corrupted through human interpolation, the Qur-án, the last book of God, came as a recapitulation of the former Gospels.

**ARTICLES OF FAITH IN ISLAM.**—These are seven in number: belief in (1) Allah; (2) Angels; (3) Books from God; (4) Messengers from God; (5) the Hereafter; (6) the Premeasurement of good and evil; (7) Resurrection after death.

The life after death, according to Islamic teaching, is not a new life, but only a continuance of this life, bringing its hidden realities into light. It is a life of unlimited progress; those who qualify themselves in this life for the progress will enter into Paradise, which is another name for the said progressive life after death, and those who get their faculties stunted by their misdeeds in this life will be the denizens of the Hell—a life incapable of appreciating heavenly bliss, and of torment—in order to get themselves purged of all impurities and thus to become fit for the life in Heaven. State after death is an image of the spiritual state in this life.

The sixth article of faith has been confused by some with what is popularly known as Fatalism. A Muslim neither believes in Fatalism nor Predestination; he believes in Premeasurement. Everything created by God is for good in the given use and under the given circumstances. Its abuse is evil and suffering.

**PILLARS OF ISLAM.**—These are five in number: (1) Declaration of faith in the Oneness of God, and in the Divine Messengership of Muhammad; (2) Prayer; (3) Fasting; (4) Almsgiving; (5) Pilgrimage to the Holy Shrine at Mecca.

**ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.**—The Muslims worship One God—the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Just, the Cherisher of All the

## ISLAMIC REVIEW

Worlds, the Friend, the Guide, the Helper. There is none like Him. He has no partner. He is neither begotten nor has He begotten any son or daughter. He is Indivisible in Person. He is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth, the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Glorious, the Magnificent, the Beautiful, the Eternal, the Infinite, the First and the Last.

**FAITH AND ACTION.**—Faith without action is a dead letter. Faith by itself is insufficient, unless translated into action. A Muslim believes in his own personal accountability for his actions in this life and in the hereafter. Each must bear his own burden, and none can expiate for another's sin.

**ETHICS OF ISLAM.**—"Imbue yourself with Divine Attributes," says the noble Prophet. God is the prototype of man, and His Attributes form the basis of Muslim ethics. Righteousness in Islam consists in leading a life in complete harmony with the Divine Attributes. To act otherwise is sin.

**CAPABILITIES OF MAN IN ISLAM.**—The Muslim believes in the inherent sinlessness of man's nature, which, made of the goodliest fibre, is capable of unlimited progress, setting him above the angels, and leading him to the border of Divinity.

**THE POSITION OF WOMAN IN ISLAM.**—Man and woman come from the same essence, possess the same soul, and they have been equipped with equal capability for intellectual, spiritual and moral attainments. Islam places man and woman under the like obligations, the one to the other.

**EQUALITY OF MANKIND AND THE BROTHERHOOD OF ISLAM.**—Islam is the religion of the Unity of God and the equality of mankind. Lineage, riches and family honours are accidental things; virtue and the service of humanity are the matters of real merit. Distinctions of colour, race and creed are unknown in the ranks of Islam. All mankind is of one family, and Islam has succeeded in welding the black and the white into one fraternal whole.

**PERSONAL JUDGMENT.**—Islam encourages the exercise of personal judgment and respects difference of opinion, which, according to the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, is a blessing of God.

**KNOWLEDGE.**—The pursuit of knowledge is a duty in Islam, and it is the acquisition of knowledge that makes men superior to angels.

**SANCTITY OF LABOUR.**—Every labour which enables man to live honestly is respected. Idleness is deemed a sin.

**CHARITY.**—All the faculties of man have been given to him as a trust from God, for the benefit of his fellow-creatures. It is man's duty to live for others, and his charities must be applied without any distinction of persons. Charity in Islam brings man nearer to God. Charity and the giving of alms have been made obligatory, and every person who possesses property above a certain limit has to pay a tax, levied on the rich for the benefit of the poor.



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